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ISLAMIC FOCUS

ISLAM IN
Ukraine

THE POETRY OF
ALI 



**ISLAM &
HOMOSEXUALITY**

Ahlan Wasahlan...

FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of the Islamic Focus comes with another offering of original articles.

The Ukraine-Russia conflict is dominating mainstream media. We give an insight into the rich heritage of Muslims and Islam in Ukraine. We also examine the way that media is covering this conflict in relation to other similar conflicts. And we give some lessons that can be learnt, especially on handling the economic fallout of the conflict and its impact on our economy.

The feature article is on aspects of homosexuality and the LGBTQ movement. What is the Muslim outlook on this topic? How does one deal with homosexuality in light of the Noble Quran and Hadith? We scrutinise the homosexual lifestyle and its place within Muslim society. The article also gives helpful tips on how to deal with having same sex attraction.

The Sunnah is a beautiful lifestyle

and giving gifts is one aspect that has a positive impact on societal relations. Learn all about gifts including some interesting ones gifted to the Prophet ﷺ.

The article on the poetry of Hazrat Ali ؑ looks at the life, wisdom and impact of a remarkable personality. We gain an appreciation of a man who serves as an inspiration for bravery, piety and life. We highlight some of the practical life lessons contained within his poetry.

The Hadith verification feature looks at Hadith questions concerning trade and commerce.

Join us on this literary adventure into the wonderful world of Islam. Your thoughts are most welcome info@islamicfocus.co.za.

Muhammad Badsha
(Moulana)

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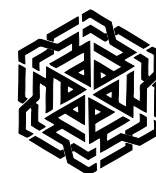
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ISLAM & HOMOSEXUALITY

THERE ARE SEVERAL CHALLENGES THAT ARE FACING MUSLIMS WHICH WERE NOT EVEN AN ISSUE A GENERATION OR TWO BACK. ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS OF THESE IS THAT OF THE LGBTQ MOVEMENT OR HOMOSEXUALITY.

There is a need to have this conversation because the lines are being blurred. Kids in Maktabas innocently ask, *"What is the problem with a Muslim being gay?"*

The general rule when faced with these confusing matters is to ask oneself, *"What have I signed up for when I claimed to be Muslim, and acknowledged Allah ﷻ as my Lord, God and Creator?"* In Surah Shura of the Noble Quran (42:10), Allah ﷻ gives us an important principle, that any issue of confusion should be referred to Allah ﷻ for a

decision, *"And in anything over which you disagree, its ruling is (to be referred) to Allah."* To get this, we need to ask the Ulama who will give us the ruling from the Noble Quran and the sublime Hadith.

"That is Allah, my Lord; in Him alone I have placed my trust, and to Him alone I turn (in every matter)." I trust Allah ﷻ completely, that His decisions are the absolute best for me, my family, my community and the universe, in this world and beyond. If I slip up, I turn back to Allah ﷻ, *"And to Him I always turn."*

Based on the evidence around me, I acknowledge Allah ﷻ as my Creator, and the Controller of every particle, *"He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth."* (Noble Quran 42:11)

Allah ﷻ then outlines the natural system He has put in place, *"He has made for you mates from among yourselves, just as He has made mates from the animals."* The purpose for making males and females is that of procreation, *"He makes you multiply in this way."* Through this system the human race and the animal kingdom continues.

WHAT IS THE ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT ON LGBTQ, HOMOSEXUALITY, LESBIANISM AND TRANSGENDER?

“And Loot (Lot) when he said to his people, ‘Do you commit the shameful act in which nobody in the world has ever preceded you?’” (Noble Quran 7:80) The people of Sodom and Gomorrah in present day Palestine, around 4000 years ago, began engaging in homosexuality. Prior to this, no one had engaged in this unnatural act. *“You come to men with lust instead of women.”* (Noble Quran 7:81) When the Angels came to Prophet Loot ﷺ in the form of handsome youth, his people came running. Paedophilia is a common theme in the homosexuality today as it was in the past.

Prophet Loot ﷺ's wife was punished for sympathising with their cause. It is common to hear that you can't judge a person. This is certainly true that we can't judge a person's end result, but when something is clearly, unambiguously and unanimously prohibited in the Noble Quran and the Hadith, we need to be clear that the action is wrong. We hate the sin just as much as we hate alcoholism, drug abuse or theft. Due to the western media propaganda, people say that we should not be harsh in condemnation of this sin, and that it should not be taken so seriously. What was Prophet Loot ﷺ's answer to his people, *“I detest your actions,”* (Noble Quran 26:168) and find them disgusting and reprehensible.

There needs to be a clear message that homosexuality has no place within Islam.

There can be no compromise on a matter of belief. A person can be doing all the actions of Islam but cannot come to terms with Angels and rejects them as farfetched. His faith has left him as a result. If you reject a fundamental of Islam established from the Noble Quran, belief has been abandoned.

THE HADITH

1. *“Allah ﷻ curses the person who engages in the act of the people of Loot ﷺ (i.e. homosexuality).”* (Ahmad)

2. *“The thing I fear most for my nation is the action of the people of Loot ﷺ.”* (Tirmidhi)

3. *“Allah ﷻ will not look at a man who satisfies his sexual desire with a man or woman through their rear private part.”* (Tirmidhi)

When Muslims speak about homosexuality as a sin, it is from their religious rights perspective. They hate the sin and not the sinner, but at the same time they don't need to justify or compromise their principles. It is within the freedom of speech espoused by western liberalism that they critique sodomy on factual grounds. We do not interfere in someone's so called choice to engage in the sin, but neither do we need to advocate for it.

When Allah ﷻ makes something Haraam (prohibited) there is definitely a tangible harm in it. To gain a meaningful insight into the dangers and harms of homosexuality, we need to go behind the scenes of the gay activist lobby. The first argument that the gay lobby brought was that it was their choice of lifestyle. When the United States Supreme Court judged in 1986 that states could criminalize sodomy, the gay lobby decided to claim minority status by

stating that sex orientation is immutable like eye, skin and hair colour. This has been proven by several studies to be unfounded.

They were no longer making it identity centered.

1. There was an orchestrated propaganda campaign to desensitize homosexuality. To lower people's guard, the imagery used was neutral such as the unicorn, the rainbow flag and calling homosexuals gay, not sodomizers.

2. Through the media, Hollywood, books, graphic novels and the like, people were made to feel bad for despising homosexuality. Homosexuals were cast as victims.

“The thing I fear most for my nation is the action of the people of Loot ﷺ.”
(Tirmidhi)

THE BORN GAY HOAX

1. Many homosexual writers themselves have written against the claim that a person is born with homosexual feelings. The hadith states that all people are born on the natural way of life. External experiences, emotional and social factors, as well as trauma play a role in driving a person towards same sex attraction.

2. Studies of twins who share the same DNA, show that if one is homosexual, nine times out of ten the other is not. If this was built into ones genes, this would not have been the case. Dr Robert Spitzer has written about his experiences with psychological remedies for sexual orientation and found that no depression occurred as a result of "repressing" the feelings. It was actually the opposite. The American Psychological Association, among others, affirmed that there were no findings to validate the born gay claim.

Essentially homosexuals are a group of people who choose to identify as such. In reality it is a political ideology, not an inbuilt inclination.

THE HARMS OF A HOMOSEXUAL LIFESTYLE ARE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR:

1. The family unit is undermined. Islam advocates chastity within the structure of marriage to build a stable, happy family with distinct roles for males and females. This as well as clear gender identity needs to be cultivated within our kids.

2. Pedophilia is an integral part

of gay activist lobbying. Many prominent gay activists have been working to lower the age of consent in the name of child rights so that they can have access to young kids. The pedophile tourism trips to Thailand, Philippines and Sri Lanka are well documented, with several rings being broken. Cory Feldman, a former child actor, said that the number one problem in Hollywood is pedophilia. The elite engage in homosexual abuse of vulnerable boy actors, and media, government and law agencies know about it, and cover it up. One can understand why films and cartoons are increasingly depicting homosexuality as acceptable when these are the producers.

The media portrayal of LGBTQ makes for interesting reading. From 2012–2020 representation of LGBTQ characters on Broadcast TV in the USA rose from 4% to 10%. Insider found a 222% increase from 2017–2019 in the number of LGBTQ characters in new kid's shows. In 1985 there were no LGBTQ characters in cartoons. By 2018, there were 25 explicit and 37 implicit LGBTQ characters.

3. Homosexuals make up an estimated 2% of society but statistics indicate that they represent 20-40% of child molestation cases. The child molestation epidemic is a direct societal harm of

homosexuality.

4. HIV/Aids began in the homosexual community in America and still represents the major proportion of new cases. In 2010, young gay and bisexual men 13-24 years old accounted for 72% of new HIV infections in that age group.

5. The rear private part is not designed for the abuse of sodomy. HIV positive men are 90 times more likely to develop anal cancer. 25% of homosexuals suffer from anal incontinence. And the list goes on.

The Hadith teaches us that, "Never does immorality spread in a community except that diseases and plagues which the previous people never experienced will afflict them." (Ibn Majah)

The gay lobbyists are trying to force their agenda especially on the youth through the sexualisation of children in the school syllabus, through digital and print media, and through entertainment and legislation.

What is our approach to a Muslim who says that he or she is gay

Don't aim to disgrace or humiliate the person. Resent the sin and deal with the person like you would any other alcoholic, drug abuser, gambler or adulterer. Engage with dignity and respect that we afford to all human beings. At the same time we cannot compromise our principles and stance. Try and offer help wherever we might be able to make a difference.

An effective answer to homosexuality is where does one draw the line? Would we allow for fulfilling one's desires through incest where a mother sleeps with her son, or where people incline towards animals? The only real law which is objective and not subjective is the Law of Allah ﷻ. Otherwise there is no end to what will be allowed.

How does a Muslim who has same sex attraction or is engaged in homosexuality deal with it?

1. Always regard homosexuality as a sin and wrong. If you commit a sin, but regard it as wrong, your faith is still intact, and there is a hope that one will reform.

2. Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi rahimahullah states that the physical and mental gaze needs to be diverted. There is no doubt that the primary reason for the rise in unnatural sexual attraction is the proliferation of public displays of sexuality. Minimize exposure to the avenues which inflame and stir these feelings. If you sit near a fire, you will feel the heat and breathe the smoke.

3. Diverting the mental gaze is to divert the mind and thoughts into another direction. Don't try to remove the thoughts or attempt to work out what is causing them as it will just compound the problem. When the Sahaba ﷺ complained to the Prophet ﷺ of the terrible and evil thoughts that came into their minds regarding Allah ﷻ, the Prophet ﷺ told them that this was a clear sign of faith. A thief comes to a place where there is treasure. These poisonous thoughts come from the devil to those in whom he has lost hope in tempting towards sin. Recite Aamantu billahi wa rusoolih to calm the mind in such instances.

4. Avoid being alone or in the wrong company.

5. Seek help from Ulama and psychologists.

It is not an easy road to defeat the devil but ultimately, when you work on it, your mind will reset to a calm state. The devil calls our bluff, making us think that if we don't give in to our sinful cravings and addictions we will die or suffer health issues. The reality is that if you keep ignoring the temptation, you will find inner peace and you will master your desires.

Allah ﷻ loves those who turn to Him constantly in repentance and seek to purify themselves. Imagine, He Loves the sinner, the one who committed the worst of filthy, debased acts, but shows remorse and a will to reform. The doors of repentance are open to anyone to take them through to the highest of ranks. Someone asked Hazrat Umar ﷺ, "Who is better: the one who does not experience the desire to sin and does not do it, or the one who feels the desire but does not commit it?" He replied that the latter were better. They are the ones whom Allah ﷻ has refined their hearts for Taqwa (piety). They will get forgiveness and an immense reward.

HADITH

VERIFICATION SERIES 09

In this series we bring you a selection of topics from hadithanswers.com



THE REWARD OF CANCELLING A TRANSACTION

Question: Kindly relate the Hadith on the reward of cancelling a transaction of the buyer who regrets buying an item.

Answer: Sayyiduna Abu Hurayrah (radiyallahu 'anhu) reports that Nabi (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: "On the day of Qiyamah, Allah will cancel the mistakes and sins of the one who cancels the sale of a Muslim (who regrets purchasing the item)."

(Sunan Abi Dawud, with slight variation in the wording, Hadith: 3454, Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith: 2199. Declared authentic (sahih) by Imam Ibn Hibban and Imam Hakim rahimahumallah, Sahih Ibn Hibban; Al Ihsan, Hadith: 5029, 5030 and Mustadrak Hakim, vol. 2 pg. 45)

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

THE GREAT REWARD FOR FARMING

Question: Is the following from the Hadith:

The farmer is rewarded for whatever he produces whether directly by his actions or not, so much so that even when birds, ants and other insects eat from the produce, he is rewarded.

Answer: This seems to be derived from the following hadith:

Sayyiduna Anas (radiyallahu'anhu) reports that Rasulullah (sallallahu'alayhi wasallam) said: "Any Muslim who plants a tree or vegetation will be rewarded for every bird, human or animal that eats from that plantation."

(Sahih Bukhari, Hadith: 2320 and Sahih Muslim, Hadith: 3945-3951) One narration in Sahih Muslim

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

REMEMBERING ALLAH ﷻ IN THE MARKETPLACE

Question: Is this narration authentic:

Whoever remembers Allah in the markets once, Allah will remember him a hundred times.

Answer: This narration has been declared a fabrication by the Muhaddithun. It is therefore not suitable to quote.

Sayyiduna 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (radiyallahu 'anhuma) reported that Nabi (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: "Whoever remembers Allah in the marketplace once, Allah will remember him one hundred times." (Refer: Tanzihush Shari'ah, vol. 2 pg. 322)

Although this narration is not suitable to quote, remembering Allah in the marketplace is indeed meritorious since people are usually negligent of Allah during trade.

See Humayd ibn Hilal Al 'Adawi's (rahimahullah) statement regarding remembering Allah ﷻ in the marketplace here.

And Allah ﷻ knows best.

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ISLAM IN *Ukraine*



The Ukraine conflict has been dominating the mainstream news of late to such an extent that you cannot avoid it. Every major news outlet is covering the conflict with Russia in extraordinary detail. In this article we explore the fascinating history of Islam and the Muslims in the region, a chapter which is largely ignored. We will also touch on the way this conflict is being covered by mass media, and some lessons we can take from the fallout. This is not a political analysis to determine who is right or wrong.

IS THERE A PLACE FOR POLITICAL ANALYSIS IN ISLAM?

Should we be bothered with the political maneuverings on the global scene? Most certainly.

1. Allah ﷻ speaks about the ongoing power struggle between the Persian and Roman Empires in the Noble Quran. The verses outline the current situation at the time of early Islam and how it would play out in the near future. The early Muslims followed the developments in this conflict closely.

2. When Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umar ؓ launched the military campaigns to conquer the Roman and Persian Empires, the strategies they adopted showed that they had an excellent understanding of the political landscape in these areas. Umar ؓ would issue directives on how the campaign should unfold, which routes to use, etc.

3. The Prophet ﷺ selected Abyssinia (present day Ethiopia) as a place of refuge for the persecuted Muslims of Makkah Mukarramah. Out of all the options available, he chose the most appropriate country, a place on another continent yet one whose king was deeply sympathetic to the Muslim cause, and who eventually accepted Islam.

We need to keep abreast of world political developments but we also need to ensure that we don't get caught up in the mainstream media analysis of matters political and gain the wrong understanding as a result.

EARLY DAYS OF ISLAM

Islam in Ukraine has a long and fascinating history. Arab traders had already been visiting the south of Ukraine from the time of the Abbasid Caliphate around the Sea of Azov, Kharson and other areas. But Islam really comes into power in Ukraine after the Mongols of Genghiz Khan start their conquests of the region. Genghiz dies in 1227 and his grandson, Batu Khan completes the invasions of the Russian territories and Ukraine 1237-1242. His brother Berkai Khan, son of Genghiz Khan's eldest son, takes control of the western quarter of the Mongol Empire which included Ukraine.

In 1258 Berkai Khan become a Muslim and an amazing chapter in Muslim and world history begins. The elite of the Mongol leadership take to Islam and the masses follow. By the 1330's three of the four major Mongol Khanates had become Muslim and they go on to become the defenders of Islam where once they strove to eradicate it.

In the meantime, Hulagu, another grandson of Genghiz Khan, set about destroying Muslim lands in Syria, sacked Baghdad and was set on marching into Palestine and possibly beyond. He had the Abbasid Caliph Al Mustasim killed. Hulagu's cousin Berkai Khan, now a Muslim, becomes enraged at the attacks on his fellow Muslims. He forms an alliance with the Mamlukes of Egypt and Hulagu's forces are defeated at Ain Jalut in Palestine.

Ukraine now becomes essentially a Muslim ruled country. Russia was still not yet a united country. By 1380 this starts to change and Russia begins attacking Muslim lands. In 1547, Ivan destroys



the Muslim forces at the Volga River and advances east. By the rule of Catherine of Russia, in the late 18th century, the Russians defeat the Ottoman Empire which was ruling Ukraine at that time and annex Crimea. She sets about destroying Masjids and brings in Russians to change the landscape. The Muslims resist the invasions valiantly and, unlike Spain where they were ultimately eradicated, they remained in southern Russia and Ukraine, a situation that continues today.

Under the communist Soviet rule, the Muslims of Ukraine suffer religious persecution. In 1944, Stalin deported the Muslims of Crimea. Within three days they were sent into a deadly exile. 191,000 Muslims lost their lives in this genocide.

UKRAINE TODAY

Today Ukraine has 400 active Salaah places which include 200 Masjids, with another 100 under construction. Post communism, the revival of Islam is in full swing. Muslims comprise large percentages of the regions annexed and invaded initially by Russia such as Crimea in 2014, Donetsk and Luhansk. The capital Kyiv has a Mufti at the main Masjid there. Kharkiv's

Masjid was also rebuilt recently, and Mariupol also has a Muslim population.

Another interesting link to Ukraine is the fact that the wife of Ottoman Sultan Sulaiman, Khurram Sultana, was from Ukraine. She is the mother of Sultan Selim II and the grandmother of Sultan Murad III. Islam has a rich heritage and legacy in Ukraine.

MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF THE CONFLICT

The mainstream media portrayal of the conflict in Ukraine has exposed a blatant hypocrisy that has always been just under the surface. Ukrainians fighting the Russian invasion are hailed as heroes for defending their homeland. They are lauded in the news for aggressively attacking the invaders. They are welcomed as refugees without any red tape. Yet the same media denies this in its treatment of the people of Syria, Palestine, Kashmir, Iraq, Afghanistan and other Muslim lands. These Muslims are labelled as terrorists and militants for taking up arms to defend their countries. In fact, if you speak in favour of them you are deemed an extremist.



THE SAMASHKI MASSACRE ON THE CHECHNYAN BORDER, 1995

It highlights the fact that mainstream media is essentially a tool of western imperialism. Don't believe all that they dish out without asking questions, and there should be no obligation to toe the line of their official narratives. There is no reason for having an inferiority complex in this regard. Learn the reality on the ground, and stand for what is right no matter how you are labelled.

Russia is no friend of the Muslims. It continues to occupy Muslim lands in the same way that India and China do. Russia has carried out 17,000 air bombing attacks on the Muslims of Syria, propping up the oppressive regime of Bashar Assad. They invaded and occupied Afghanistan, decimated Chechnya and Daghestan, and are closely allied to the Serbs in the war on the Bosnian and Kosovan Muslims.

The western supporters of Ukraine are no friends of the Muslims. The hapless Muslims of Ukraine are caught in the middle of the current political game much as they were in World War II between communism and Nazism.

LESSONS FROM THIS CONFLICT

1. Wherever injustice is perpetrated, Muslims need to stand up and speak against it. "Do not let the enmity and hatred for people prevent you from being just." (Noble Quran 5:8) Empathize with those undergoing suffering no matter who it is. This is a distinguishing quality of Muslims, unlike the hypocrisy practiced by the West.

2. Don't become overwhelmed with anxiety. The economic fallout is predicted to be intense. Abu Hazim rahimahullah was told, "Don't you see that prices have risen?" he observed, "Why does it make you sad? The One who provided for us when prices were low is the same Being who will be providing now that things are expensive." We are taught in a Dua to ask for acceptance of the Divine Decisions of Allah ﷻ (Ibn Majah). We accept all the conditions that are given to us, for the reality is that

how can we ever escape it?

3. Allah ﷻ gives an example of a town that enjoyed peace and security, with its provisions coming in plenty from every place. When this town showed ingratitude for these favours by disobeying Allah ﷻ, it faced hunger and fear due to insecurity. (Noble Quran 16:112) We need to look at our situation: where we once enjoyed relatively better safety and security, and an abundance of goods and business opportunities, we now face a high crime rate and financial instability. When unemployment rises and the cost of living increases, the crime rate goes up and fear permeates society. We have to face reality. By openly sinning, and the society wide increase in violating the laws of Allah ﷻ, we are showing ingratitude for the blessings we once enjoyed. If we keep attributing these adverse situations to natural phenomena and blaming politics, when will we be motivated to change?

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THE POETRY OF *Hazrat Ali*

MAY ALLAH BE PLEASED WITH HIM

People are searching for the meaning of life and the reality of existence. These questions have occupied great minds through the centuries. Today is no different. The interest shown in books on motivation, self-help and life wisdom is a continuation of this human curiosity. Allah ﷻ selected Prophets from humanity to convey the ultimate truths of our existence. Those who were closest to them inherited this legacy of wisdom.

After the Prophets alaihimus salaam, the greatest of human beings were the Sahaba ﷺ. Muslim scholars are unanimous that from among them the first four Caliphs were the greatest in the order of their rule. This article looks at the fourth of them, Hazrat Ali ﷺ and takes a peek into some of his wisdom regarding life's challenges.

EARLY LIFE

Although fourth in status, Hazrat Ali ﷺ possessed many attributes and merits in which he was unparalleled. He is a unique pearl from the family of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, raised under his blessed hand and guidance. The Prophet ﷺ lost his father before he was born. By the age of six his mother had passed away and by eight his grandfather. His uncle Abu

Talib takes him in and raises him as a son. Abu Talib's wife, Fathima bint Asad ﷺ raises him like a mother. When she passed away, the Prophet ﷺ praised her saying, "My dear mother. After my mother you have loved me as a caring mother loves her child. Many times you went hungry in order to feed me." He made Dua for her, wrapped her in his Qamees (long shirt) and dug the niche in her grave himself. (Tabrani)

The Prophet ﷺ grows up, marries and moves on with his life. Fortunes change and Abu Talib now undergoes difficult financial circumstances. His family rally to his assistance by adopting his children and the Prophet ﷺ takes in Hazrat Ali ﷺ. He was around five years old at the time according to some views. As a result, he grew up never having worshipped idols. It was a test of the truth of the call of Prophethood that those closest to the Prophet ﷺ were the first to accept. Hazrat Ali ﷺ becomes the first child to accept Islam.

He benefits from the Prophetic upbringing and becomes a renowned orator, and a fearless warrior, with unparalleled intellect, wisdom and foresight. He was known for his proficiency as a judge

and for his expertise in Fiqh (legal rulings). His eloquence in poetry was just one of his many skills. He stood by the Prophet ﷺ in the 13 years of hardship in Makkah Mukarramah. He was the one who slept in the Prophet ﷺ's bed when he emigrated to Madinah Munawwarah and assassins were surrounding the house. He marries the beloved daughter of the Prophet ﷺ, Hazrat Fathima ﷺ in the second year after the migration to Madinah Munawwarah. From their union, through their sons Hazrat Hasan and Hussain ﷺ, the noble lineage of Nabi ﷺ continued up to today.

Among the accomplishments of Hazrat Ali ﷺ was that he was a flagbearer at the Battle of Badr while in his early 20's. At Khaibar the Prophet ﷺ said that he would give the flag to someone who loves Allah ﷻ and the Prophet ﷺ, and they love him. The flag was given to Hazrat Ali ﷺ and under his leadership the Muslims gained victory. He was sent to Yemen twice by the Prophet ﷺ, once as a judge. He became the Caliph at a turbulent time in early Muslim history with rebels threatening the stability of the fledgling state and intent on causing chaos.

HIS LEGACY

When it comes to Hazrat Ali ؓ, there are two groups which are misled. One group elevated him to the divinely appointed post of Imam as the Shia do. Many others went to extremes in their love for him as well. Another group denied his status such as the Kharijites, and they even succeeded in assassinating him. We have deep love for Hazrat Ali ؓ and acknowledge his status as one of the greatest men after Hazrat Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthmaan ؓ.

In a like manner, people attribute many fabricated speeches and words of wisdom to him. No doubt he left behind a wealth of wisdom, but we need to be careful in what we attribute to him. An example is the well-known book Nahjul Balagha. Most of the narrations contained in it are not authentically established from Hazrat Ali ؓ, and there are many statements which he did not make. The book was put together by a Shia author with the obvious intent of promoting Shia claims. Imam Yusuf al Nabahani rahimahullah, the great Sufi and scholar, strongly warned against reading this work.

POETRY

Poetry is an ancient manner of expression. It exists in every language. When deep human sentiments cannot be expressed in prose, they emerge in the form of poetry. The culture of every refined

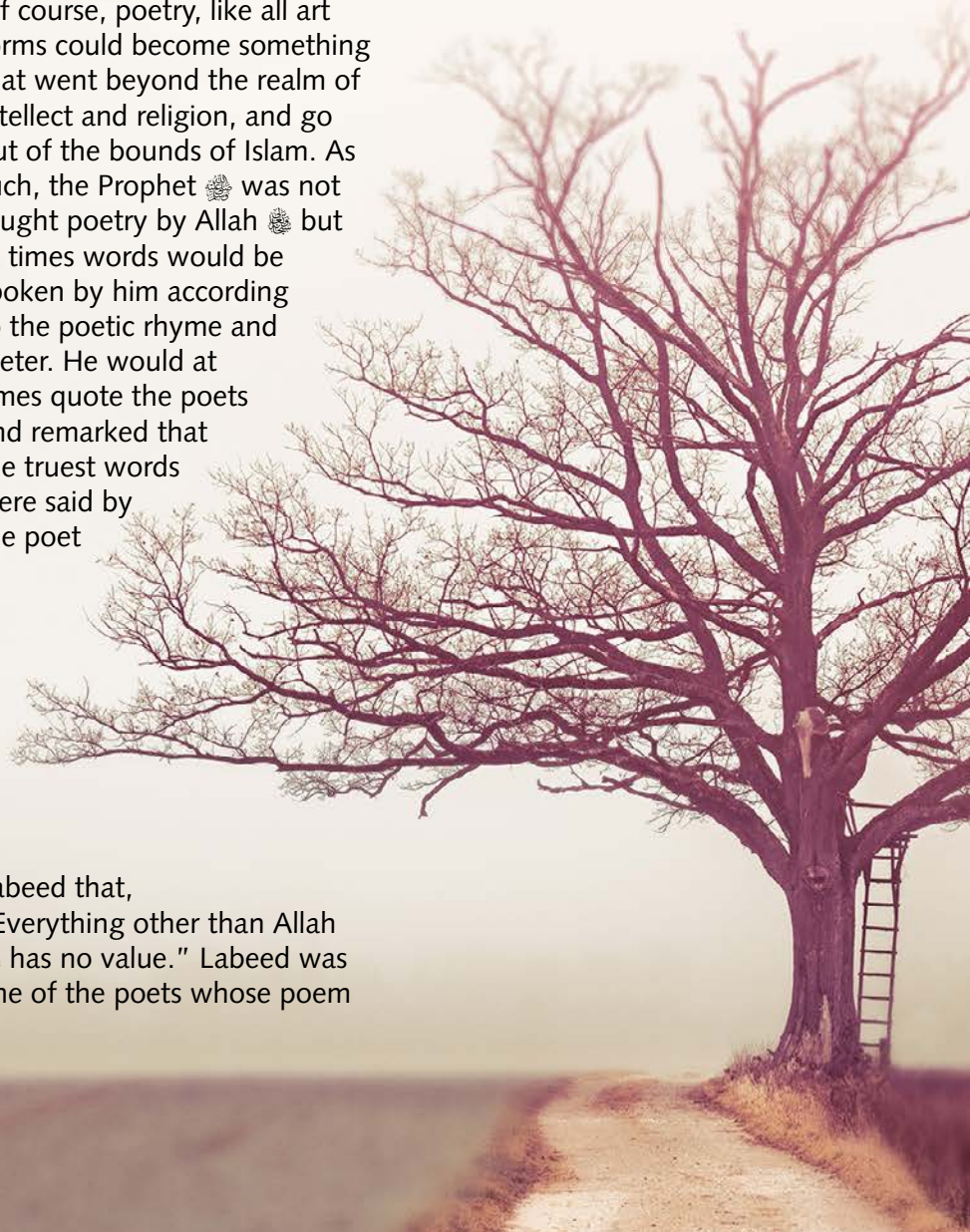
nation largely comprises of the unique language of poetry, and its presence plays a vital role in fashioning the mindsets of those nations. Poetry has a significant position in the history of Islam as well. Hazrat Umar ؓ said regarding pre Islamic Arabic poetry, "Poetry is the record of the Arabs," preserving their cultural heritage. Hazrat Hassaan ibn Thabit ؓ unleashed his verses on the disbelievers in the time of the Prophet ﷺ. Hazrat Abdullah ibn Rawaha and Ka'b ibn Malik ؓ were also accomplished poets of the Sahaba ؓ.

Of course, poetry, like all art forms could become something that went beyond the realm of intellect and religion, and go out of the bounds of Islam. As such, the Prophet ﷺ was not taught poetry by Allah ﷻ but at times words would be spoken by him according to the poetic rhyme and meter. He would at times quote the poets and remarked that the truest words were said by the poet

comprised one of the seven that the Arabs hung in the Ka'bah and formed the basis of Arab poetry and culture. He went on to accept Islam.

Hazrat Ali ؓ left such a vast and varied legacy in terms of piety, chivalry, wisdom and intellect that it baffles historians today. He is regarded as the patron of the Sufis, and renowned among jurists for his legal and judicial wisdom. What many might not be aware of is his masterful command of the language, and that he spoke it with great eloquence.

Labeed that,
"Everything other than Allah ﷻ has no value." Labeed was one of the poets whose poem





...Seek success through knowledge. Everyone is dead, while the scholars are truly alive.

He is not as well recognized for his poetry as his other skills which is a shame. Every line he composed is full of wisdom and teaches important life truths.

Ahmad Hassan al Zayyaat rahimahullah said, "Besides the Prophet ﷺ, we cannot find in the era before or after him, anyone as eloquent as Hazrat Ali ؑ. There was no one as articulate or well-spoken as him. He was a fountain of wisdom, and streams of eloquence flowed from his tongue. His command of the language was such that he could write what he willed in then manner he willed. It is unanimously agreed that he was the greatest Muslim orator (after the Prophet ﷺ) and an exemplary writer."

Abbas al Aqqad says, "The style we find in the language quoted from Hazrat Ali ؑ is such that it cannot be surpassed."

His poetry has a very genuine style, free from pretentiousness. He avoided using overly complex words and convoluted sentences. His poems are a bouquet, where each flower has its own distinct fragrance.

His writing shows a deep understanding of human weaknesses and strengths, and the reality of life.

Let us explore some of his wisdom and advices contained within his poetry:

1. Superiority of Knowledge

Hazrat Ali ؑ says that all people are alike, descended from the same ancestors: "Honour belongs to no one except those who have knowledge. They are pious and guide others in search of the truth. Seek success through knowledge. Everyone is dead, while the scholars are truly alive."

2. The Reality of Life

"There are states of affairs that one faces – hardship and ease, either bringing blessings or calamities. But ultimately what brings balance to one's life is knowing that neither do times of ease remain continuously, nor the difficult times. When a knot is tied by the destiny of Allah ﷻ against you, then nothing but the Divine decree of destiny can cause it to break." The ultimate reality of existence is that, "One morning you are alive, and by

that evening you are laid to rest in the grave. Nor do you have any knowledge to be pre warned of your death."

3. Relief after Tough Times

"I say to my aching soul and bruised heart, when they have been narrowed by the heavy burden of time: Persevere through the rough times, for surely they will end. Allah ﷻ will soon open a door for blessings to descend which will be the means of your relief and peace of mind."

4. With Destiny, an Effort is still required

While accepting the divine destiny, the system of this world requires that an effort be made. Get a job, do business. "You cannot earn a living through wishes alone. So place your bucket competing with others in the well of life. Some days it will come back with delicious water, and some days with mud and a few drops." This balanced approach to living in the world is essential to peace of mind. To take one aspect in isolation leads to an extremist and imbalanced outlook on life. Everything must be read in context and all together. The motivation to strive and do your best is something that all great scholars emphasized.

The poems quoted have been taken from the book, The Poetic Works of Sayyiduna Ali ؑ translated by Abdullah Ayaz Mullanee

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Giving Gifts

One of Allah ﷻ's qualities is that He is Al Wahhab, the One who gives in abundance. Hibah in Arabic refers to making someone the owner of an item without taking anything in return

No one else besides Allah ﷻ can truly give a gift because there are two fundamentals attached to gifts:

1. To make someone the owner,
2. Not to take anything in return.

These are impossible for a human being. Firstly, we do not own anything in reality. Everything we have is a trust given to us by Allah ﷻ for a limited time. Secondly, we do things based on the benefit we get in return, whether worldly or for the Hereafter. You might want love, which is not a bad motive, or praise, or you would anticipate a reward from Allah ﷻ, or His Love, or to emulate the Sunnah. There is always an underlying motive. Allah ﷻ on the other hand is independent of any reward.

Our giving of gifts is also limited in application. We can't bring people into existence, grant cure to the ill, grant people children, give guidance to belief in Allah ﷻ, etc. If you try to list the favours of Allah ﷻ, whether financial, or a skill, or a talent, you would not be able to list them all. (Noble Quran) "Whatever blessing you have is actually from Allah ﷻ." (Noble Quran) Al Wahhab, Allah ﷻ, showers bounties on all without us even being worthy of them. This is only through His favour and kindness.

Allamah Khattabi rahimahullah explains the difference between our gifts and the giving of Allah ﷻ:

1. His gifts are of different types.
2. His gifts are never exhausted. Billions of people have benefitted from these and will continue to benefit from them in Paradise.
3. He does not take a recompense for His gifts. When we reflect on this quality of Allah ﷻ, it becomes a means of solace and comfort especially when we lose someone close to us, whether a child, or parent, or spouse. We understand that they were a gift from Allah ﷻ,

that He takes it away when He wishes, and we should be grateful that He allowed us to know and love that individual. More than that, He will return these gifts to us in Paradise in a far better form, "Those who believe and their children follow them in belief, We will join them with their children." (Noble Quran) We will enjoy the company for eternity of all the family members we loved and lost, with a guarantee of never losing them again.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHARITY AND GIVING A GIFT?

1. The primary motive in charity is to gain reward, and the secondary motive is to make someone happy.
2. The primary motive in giving a gift is to make someone happy, and the secondary motive is to gain reward. (Faidh al Baari)

GIVING GIFTS IS A SUNNAH ENCOURAGED BY THE PROPHET ﷺ.

1. The Prophet ﷺ used to accept gifts and would give gifts in return. (Bukhari)
2. Give each other gifts, you will love one another. (Bukhari)
3. Giving gifts to family members cements the love and bond, "Confer gifts mutually. It enhances love and destroys malice." (Tirmidhi) Joining family ties, while using gifts to do this, results in the added benefit of gaining more sustenance and a long life: "Whoever desires expansion in his sustenance and a prolonged life, should treat his relatives with kindness." (Bukhari)
4. One of the easy gifts to give, as well as being a tried and tested method of increase in wealth, is to gift food: "Give and receive gifts of food; your sustenance will be increased through it." (Jaami al Sagheer)
5. "When you cook gravy, increase the water and share your food with your neighbours."

(Adab al Mufrad)

SOME RULES REGARDING GIFTS:

1. Observe equality when giving gifts to your children while you are alive. (Bukhari) When you pass away, then the inheritance shares as detailed in the Noble Quran will apply.
2. Never take back a gift. "The person who takes back his gift is like a dog that vomits and then licks up its vomit." (Bukhari)
3. You can also give a gift once you die. This is in the form of a bequest which is limited to not more than one third of your net estate after payment of debts. The bequest can only be made for an individual who will not be inheriting from you. It can also be made to an organization or anyone else you wish for.

SOME GIFTS GIVEN TO THE PROPHET ﷺ:

1. A bed. Asad ibn Zurrah ﷺ gifted a teak wood bed to him because the people of Makkah Mukarramah were fond of sleeping on beds. The Prophet ﷺ used it till the end of his life.
2. The king of Abyssinia gave him perfume.
3. The ruler of Egypt gifted him a mirror, comb and a glass vessel.

Kings would exchange gifts through history. In the eight century Harun al Rashid, the Umayyad Caliph gave an elephant to Charlemagne, King of the Franks, along with a water clock. This clock had 12 metal balls that chimed the hour and 12 figurines that paraded after emerging from small windows. It is worth noting that Muslims were at the cutting edge of innovation and invention well before the Renaissance. An interesting read in this regard is the Banu Musa brothers. They were three creative scientists who worked in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, and mechanics. They wrote the Kitab al Hiyal (Book of Ingenious

Devices). They aimed to simplify people's lives by creating useful and practical devices while adding some fun elements. This resulted in items such as the Haunted Bottle and the Moody Jug.

HOW DO YOU REPAY GIFTS?

1. Do something similar in return. "If somebody does an act of kindness to you, repay it with a similar act of kindness. If you are incapable of doing so, make Dua for that person." (Majma)
2. Recite the Dua: Jazakallah khair for someone who gave you a gift. By doing so, you will exceed the requirements of praising and thanking the one who gave you the gift. (Targheeb)
3. Hazrat Aeysha ﷺ said that if you are unable to repay the kind gesture, then publicize the kindness of that individual to others. This is a form of expressing gratitude. Do take the person's nature into account; some people are not comfortable with their good being known.

IN SUMMARY

1. Giving gifts is a beautiful Sunnah which brings tremendous benefits in this world and the Hereafter.
2. Appreciate the gifts that Allah ﷻ has given us for whatever amount of time He deems appropriate.
3. Contemplate on and internalize the quality of Allah ﷻ being Al Wahhab (the only One who truly gives) and it will provide a means of comfort on the loss of a gift. It will also enhance the gratefulness we ought to experience when we get a gift.

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